



# River Kayaking Hand-Paddling

(Sample Skills Course)

**Course Overview:** The **River Kayak Hand-Paddling** course is a program emphasizing safety, enjoyment and hand-paddling skill acquisition for entry-level through intermediate individuals in public, private, and commercial settings.

## **Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC):**

ACA courses are open to all individuals who acknowledge the ability to perform the following essential eligibility criteria.

1. Breathe independently (i.e. not require medical devices to sustain breathing)
2. Independently maintain sealed airway passages while under water
3. Independently hold head upright without neck / head support
4. Manage personal care independently or with assistance of a companion
5. Manage personal mobility independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance
6. Follow instructions and effectively communicate independently or with assistance of a companion
7. Independently turn from face-down to face-up and remain floating face up while wearing a properly fitted life jacket\*
8. Get in / out of a paddle craft independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance\*
9. Independently get out and from under a capsized addlecraft\*
10. Reenter or remount the paddlecraft following deep water capsize independently or with a reasonable amount of assistance\*
11. Maintain a safe body position while attempting skills, activities and rescues listed in the appropriate Course Outline, and have the ability to recognize and identify to others when such efforts would be unsafe given your personal situation\*

*\* To participate in adaptive programs, participants must acknowledge only the first six EEC listed above. Entry-level adaptive programs will involve teaching and practicing EEC #7-11.*

**Course Prerequisites:** None

**Instructors:** ACA Level 2: River Kayaking Instructor (or higher)

**Course Duration:** 2-6 hours (Instructors may adjust the course at their discretion)

**Course Location / Venue:** Course should be conducted on both flat water and moving water rated up to instructor's current certification level

**Class Ratio:** 5 students : 1 Instructor; with an additional instructor or qualified assistant the ratio can be 10 : 2



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The following is a general summary of course content for the **River Kayak Hand-Paddling** course. The content covered and sequence of instruction should be adjusted to best fit the participant's needs, class location and time allowance.

## Course Content

### Introduction, Expectations, & Logistics:

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student & instructor course expectations and limitations
- Course itinerary & site logistics
- Review waiver, assumption of risk, challenge by choice, medical disclosure
- About the ACA
- PFD policy (always wear on water, inflatable lifejackets not allowed in this course)
- Appropriate personal behavior
- No alcohol / substance abuse
- Proper etiquette on & off the water
- Respect private property
- Practice Leave No Trace ethics

### The Paddling Environment:

- Wind
- Waves
- Weather
- Water

### Personal Preparation:

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability
- Personal ability
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up
- Safe paddle and board handling
- Safety and rescue considerations
- Personal equipment (reviewed by instructor)

### Water Comfort:

- Launching, carries, landing
- Water confidence and comfort
- Wet exits in two ways: (1) utilizing the spray skirt grab loop and (2) releasing the skirt off the hip (with and without hand-paddles)

### Terminology of Paddling:

- Types of strokes: power, turning & bracing
- Stroke components: catch, propulsion, recovery, control and correction
- Effective body usage and biokinetics

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- Use of larger torso muscles
- Body position and how it differs from using a shafted paddle
- Arms as struts connecting paddle to torso
- Avoidance of positions that contribute to shoulder injury or dislocations (“Paddler’s Box”)

## Equipment:

- Kayak: how the shape, style, volume, and intended use may be affected by utilizing hand-paddles versus a shafted paddle
- Hand paddles: types, parts, size & shape, fitting, position, tethers
- Spray skirts: types & materials, grab loop, and how removal is achieved when using hand-paddles
- Care of equipment: how to store and preserve hand-paddles depending on material
- Personal equipment for hand-paddles: gloves, tethers, flotation

## Rescue:

- Principles of Rescue
- Priorities - People, Boats, Gear
- Responsibilities of Victim
- Responsibilities of Rescuers
- Types of Rescue
- Self-Rescue in moving current (REQUIRED)
- Body/boat positions
- Handling equipment
- Boat-Assisted Rescue
- Tired Swimmer
- Towing
- Bumping
- Shoreline Rescue - Extension Rescues
- Use of throw-bags/ropes
- Pinned craft
- Introduce ACA River Rescue Course
- Need to take a First Aid & CPR course

## Maneuvers (Practiced on Flatwater)

- Spins (onside and offside): boat pivots in place
- Forward: boat moves in a reasonably straight line
- Reverse: boat moves in a reasonably straight line
- Stopping: boat stops within a reasonable distance
- Turns: boat turns in broad arc made while underway
- Veering, carving, and paddling the “inside circle”
- Abeam: boat moves sideways without headway
- Sidelips: boat moves sideways with headway

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## **Strokes Required**

- Forward Sweep (anticipatory and reactive techniques)
- Reverse Sweep
- Neutral Sweep/Neutral Traverse (*hands moving in opposite directions to create a boat rotation*)
- Forward (alternating hands)
- Power Forward (both hands)
- Back (alternating hands)
- Power Back (both hands)
- High Brace
- Single Brace (*one-hand/one-side*)
- Double Brace (*both hands on same side*)
- Wing Brace (*both hands on opposite sides*)
- Stern Draw
- Side Draw
- Bow Draw
- Stationary Draw
- Sculling Draw
- T (bow) Rescue

*Optional at instructor's certification level and discretion*

- Roll

## **River Reading and Running (Practiced on moving water rated to instructor certification level)**

- How to establish the "best" route and how that might differ for when using hand-paddles
- Identifying, planning for, and navigating obstacles and hazards when using hand-paddles
- Cold Water considerations, especially as they pertain to hand-paddling
- Universal river signals
- Demonstration of effective use of paddle strokes with hand-paddles
- Demonstration of effective whitewater maneuvers with hand-paddle
- Ferries
- Eddy Turns
- Peel Outs Wide (exit wide from eddy line)
- Shallow (exit close to eddy line)
- Sequences of Maneuvers
- C-turns (Peel out and eddy into same eddy)
- S-turns (Peel out one side and eddy into opposite side)
- Surfing

## **Individual Development**

### ***Judgement***

In addition to learning hard skills, the importance of developing personal judgment and group responsibility increases when using hand-paddles, particularly on more difficult paddling venues.



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## ***Self-Evaluation***

- What moves are required to successfully run the rapid?
- Can I perform the required moves with hand-paddles?
- What are the consequences of missing the required moves?
- Am I willing to accept these consequences?
- What if?
- Rescue considerations

***Group Evaluation:*** *Your decision to use hand-paddles as a primary or secondary tool may depend largely on, not only your personal skills and abilities, but the river venue and the group:*

- Skill level of the group
- Size of the group
- Group consequences
- Condition of the group
- Continue learning process from more experienced paddlers
- Responsibility to support other paddlers (no peer pressure)
- Group Equipment: extra paddles, rescue sling, dry-bags, maps, first aid kit and location, rescue gear
- Guidebooks / Local Knowledge
- Assessing Current Environmental Conditions (including: Water, Weather, Time of Day, and Temperature Limited Access: Canyons, Cliffs, Remote Area)
- Assessing Personal and Group Dynamics (Skills, Equipment, Group Makeup, Mental Status)
- Logistics, group selection, leadership)

## **Conclusion & Wrap Up:**

- Group debrief / Individual feedback
- Course limitations right w/ multiple stroke combinations
- Importance of First Aid & CPR
- Importance of additional instruction, practice, experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety & rescue training
- Demo advanced maneuver
- Life sport / Paddling options
- Local paddling groups / Clubs
- Handouts / Reference materials
- ACA Membership forms
- Course evaluation
- Participation cards